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OUR NATIONAL DEFENCES.

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'STEAM has bridged the Channel,' were the memorable words of Lord Palmerston, when he advocated the defence by fortification of the vital points of our empire—Dover, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Portland, Pembroke, Woolwich, Chatham, and Cork. Parliament voted about ten million pounds, afterwards reduced to eight millions; and under the able direction of the corps of Royal Engineers, the defence works, which were commenced about 1861, have been constructed.

Fortification is the art of so combining obstacles, natural or otherwise, that a small number of troops may successfully oppose the attack of a larger force, whether by land or sea. The object of fortification in England has been to secure the safety of our great dockyards, arsenal, certain harbours, and military positions; and to provide defensible barracks, bomb-proof hospitals, and suitable depôts for the security of warlike stores. The great advance made within the last twenty-five years in artillery, by which cannon can now throw shot and shell about five miles, rendered it necessary that this principle should be carried out in the defence of the places we have alluded to.

History, ancient and modern, gives many instances of the value of fortification. The massive works of Babylon and Nineveh have played their parts; Jerusalem with its watch-towers and ramparts kept at bay for many months the armies of Rome; Athens with its long walls baffled its enemies for years; and in more modern days, many an English castle held out bravely with a scanty garrison against a numerous enemy. The Duke of Wellington held his position in the Peninsular War for several months by means of the Lines of Torres Vedras; the fortification of Lucknow tended largely to check the progress of the Indian Mutiny; the earthworks

of Sebastopol enabled the Russians to keep the British army during one terrible winter in the trenches of the Crimea; and the Paris fortifications long arrested the advance of the victorious Prussians.

Many systems of fortification have been invented by different engineers. The principal ones are Vauban's first, second, and third system; the French modern system, Cormontaigne's, Carnot, Coehoorn, Montalembert's; and the German system. Theoretically, the works of defence are assumed to be built upon a level plain; but in practice it is the duty of the Royal Engineers to arrange their fortresses so as to adapt them to the defence of the position they are intended to protect.

Vauban uses bastions about four hundred yards apart, encircled by ditches and a path called a covered-way, where the sentries are posted, the whole being screened by a sloping bank of earth called a glacis. He invented ricochet fire, that is, the destructive art of firing shot or shell into forts so as to strike inside, and then bound along, destroying all in their path. The French modern system is merely an improvement on Vauban, effected by having large ravelins or projecting works pushing themselves forward upon the position it is intended to protect; and Cormontaigne made some modifications on both systems. The main principles of Carnot, a distinguished French engineer officer, were—to fire perpetually from mortars at his enemy, and encircle his town with thick masonry walls, pierced with loopholes, and protected, by being in the ditch, from distant fire. Coehoorn, a Dutch engineer, flourished in the seventeenth century, and invented a small mortar, long used in the British service for throwing small shot and shell; but the great credit attached to his name is due to his discovery that situations having aquatic sites must be defended on different principles from those on dry ones. He defends his town by placing a dry ditch within a wet one; and the fortresses of Breda, Namur, and Bergen-op-Zoom are good examples of his system. Montalembert advocated

a system of masonry for protecting his cannon; and he armed his fortresses with such a number of guns that their heavy concentrated fire would effectually keep a besieger at a distance. Some of his ideas have been utilised in the fortification of Coblenz.

The German system has been much used on the continent. Forts Alexander, Kaiser Franz near Coblenz, Rastadt, Antwerp, Wesel, and Erfurt, are fair examples; and its principles have been adopted in many of the new works in the United Kingdom. Its conspicuous features are the inclosing of a given space by the shortest possible line of works; the placing of isolated defensible works in prominent situations, defending the ditch by powerful detached towers called *caponnières*; placing casemated barracks, heavily armed, in the vital points of the position; and making free use of mining some portions of the ground round the fortress, so that if an enemy attempted to establish himself too near, he could readily be blown up. The system has the advantage that a small force can defend it, and the works being concentrated, are well under the supervision of the commander.

Since the fifteenth century, mining has played an important part in military operations. Such a system of attack is defended by counter-mines—that is, mines prepared beforehand; and in this country, but more especially in continental fortresses, counter-mines have been extensively adopted; the application of electricity to warlike purposes suggesting a ready means of exploding them at any given moment. The besieger is perhaps driving his mine towards the fortress; the besieged hears the sound of the underground working, and loads his counter-mine, already formed, with dynamite, gun-cotton, gunpowder, or whatever explosive he may have on hand, hurries away, and fires the counter-mine, which not only destroys whatever may be on the surface of the ground, but whatever underground mines lie within a given distance, called the radii of rupture. Both soldiers and sailors greatly dread mines, whether in fortifications on land, or torpedoes or fire-ships on the ocean.

One hundred pounds of gunpowder judiciously applied in blowing up houses or bridges, will usually stop the progress of a conflagration, or destroy any bridge so that the passage of troops or guns would be effectually prevented. The siege of Antwerp in 1584 is perhaps the most renowned instance of what a comparatively small quantity of gunpowder will effect. The Duke of Parma had thrown a bridge across the Scheldt, and the besieged were most anxious to destroy it. A hollow stone chamber was therefore built on a long vessel, and filled with gunpowder. The roof was loaded with huge slates and blocks of stone, the deck strewn with destructive missiles, the fuse lighted, and the vessel allowed to drift towards the bridge,

when an explosion took place with the most appalling results.

The *Times* 'Beemaster' has given amusing instances of the application of bees to defensive purposes. A small privateer manned by fifty men, but having on board some hives of bees, was pursued by a Turkish galley, manned by five hundred seamen and soldiers. When the latter came alongside, the crew of the privateer mounted the rigging with their hives, and threw them upon their foes, who, astonished at this novel mode of warfare, hastened to escape from the fury of the enraged bees. Another instance occurred, when a rabble at Hohnstein, in Thungaria, attempted to pillage the house of the parish minister; he caused some beehives to be thrown among the mob, who in consequence soon dispersed. Again, Vauban narrates how bees played an important part at the siege of Châté, in Lorraine. After a siege, the town was being stormed, and during the assault, the besieged threw a few hives of bees upon the heads of the storming-party. The little creatures stung the besiegers so dreadfully that they had to retire; and the historian tells that 'the bees were not the least cause of the siege being abandoned.'

The fortifications of the United Kingdom are armed with breech-loading rifle-cannon weighing from thirty-eight tons downwards; and with smooth-bore cannon from five tons downwards, and capable of projecting heavy shot and shell to distances up to five miles. The infantry who would man the ramparts in the event of war, are armed with the Henry-Martini breech-loading rifle, in which a sword or bayonet can be fitted. And at close range, case-shot—tin canisters full of bullets—can be fired from smooth-bore cannon with deadly effect against troops or boats.

Within the last few years, two inventions in the system of mounting guns have attracted much notice; we mean those of Captain Heathorn and Colonel Moncrieff. Captain Heathorn's gun is elevated or depressed on an imaginary pivot at its muzzle, so that it can fire from a casemate embrasure—a hole in the wall—or from a ship's port just large enough to allow the muzzle to enter. Colonel Moncrieff, by aid of a counterpoise, raises his gun high enough to fire, and then the shock of the recoil causes it to sink down like a 'Jack-in-the-box' into the original position under cover of the ramparts.

Dover being the nearest port to France, and connected by railway with the capital and principal towns, is an important military position. An enemy's force, if unopposed, could readily land there in a day, and march into London. Some of its fortifications date from the time of the Romans, and some were added during the Saxon and Norman epochs. The works were materially strengthened during the French revolutionary war, and were divided into two sets—the Western Heights Defences, which contain Archcliff Fort and the Drop Redoubt; and the

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Castle Defences, including the new castle Hill Fort, the town lying in the valley between them. The proposed Channel Tunnel, which has recently attracted so much attention, starts from Dover. The Royal Engineers can no doubt erect such powerful fortifications as to effectually guard the entrance to the Tunnel, and a system of mines can be readily arranged to destroy it from the British shore.

Portsmouth, with its roadstead of Spithead, dockyard, and convict establishment, lies upon the route an enemy might select in marching upon London from the south, and has consequently been strongly fortified. Spit Fort, Horse Fort, and Nomans Land Fort, which occupy shoals in the sea near the entrance of the harbour, are partly plated with iron, and contain numerous thirty-eight and twelve-ton guns, which would speedily settle the fate of an enemy attempting to force the passage to the harbour, or burn the dockyard and town. Hurst Castle and other powerful works defend the passage to the Needles; and numerous forts and batteries cover the landing-places on the Isle of Wight; while a military road has been formed on its southern shore. The Gosport advanced lines, extending from Portsmouth harbour to Fort Gomer on the Solent, defend the position to the westward; while the chain of powerful forts running along the ridge of Portsdown Hills, about seven thousand five hundred yards from the dockyard, prevents the possibility of an enemy planting his guns on the summit. The rear of the Gosport position is defended by the Stokes Bay Lines; the Hilsea Lines defend the dockyard on the eastward; while the guns of Southsea Castle, Lumps Forts, Eastney Batteries, and Fort Cumberland, would give a good account of themselves in bearing upon the entrance to the harbour.

Plymouth, our western naval port and anchorage, with its magnificent harbour, has been rendered secure by defending the entrance to the Hamoaze, thus repelling attack by outsiders, and insuring the security of the Sound as an anchorage for our own ships, by means of a battery on the Mount Edgecumbe estate; another at Drake Island; a third on the Breakwater, and by redoubts at East and West King. To prevent a land attack between the east and west, the Staddon Heights have been occupied by suitable fortifications; and the Devonport lines, Plymouth Citadel, and certain smaller works in the direction of Mount Pleasant and Stone House Hill, protect the east of the Hamoaze. The north-eastern defences extend from Fort Effort on the right to Forts Agaton and Ernsettle on the left. Portland, with its artificial harbour and convict establishment, has been defended by turning Verne Hill into a second Gibraltar, and placing Jetty Fort close to the town of Weymouth, and another work at the end of the Breakwater.

Pembroke, on the west of our network of railways, contains a good dockyard, and lies upon the beautiful harbour of Milford. For the benefit of hostile ships forcing their way into the harbour, a powerful casemated bomb-proof fort, armed with heavy cannon, has been built upon Thorn Island, at the mouth of the harbour, where guns cross fire with those at West Block House and Dale Point at about one thousand yards. To prevent the dockyard being bombarded

from the sea, South Hook Point casemated barracks have been built, with batteries on its front, so that the artillery can sweep down the haven. The Stack Rock, lying in the haven, has been strongly fortified, a casemated battery of heavy guns placed at Popton Point, and another at Hubberstone. The dockyard is overlooked by two martello towers; and Fort Defensible stands on the ridge above the town.

Woolwich, the headquarters of our royal artillery, and our only arsenal, is, unfortunately, commanded by Shooter's Hill, at about two miles' distance; and the strong fort recommended by the Royal Commission in 1860 to be placed on its summit, has not yet been commenced. If a battle were lost to the southward of London, the fort at Shooter's Hill would cover the passage over the military bridge formed near. Without such means, our army might be shut up in the district to the south of London, and communications with the interior of England cut off.

Tilbury Fort, on the Essex shore, aided by the guns of New Tavern Fort Coal House Batteries, Shornmead, Cliffe, and Gravesend, and possibly by an iron-plated steamer anchored in the river, would effectually defend Woolwich in this direction, and also protect our national powder-magazine at Purfleet. Chatham, a valuable dockyard on the Medway, is protected by its old lines, encircling the gun-wharf, dockyard, and certain barracks, and commands the only bridges in the district over the Medway, and is connected by railway with London, Woolwich, and Dover; so that if an enemy landed within twenty-five miles to the east, or fifty miles to the west of Dover, he could be attacked by the garrisons of both places. Forts Hoo and Darnet would bring a heavy artillery-fire upon steamers attempting to pass to Chatham; and Upnor Castle, which repulsed the Dutch fleet in 1667, might still aid in carrying out the old inscription of the time of Queen Elizabeth:

Who gave me this sheen to none other end
But strongly to stand, her navie to defend.

Cork, our only Irish naval station, has its capacious harbour, where a fleet could remain to act on the defence of our coasts, protected by Forts Camden and Carlisle at the entrance, and by Fort Westmoreland on Spike Island. The Royal Commission that reported about 1860 on the defenceless condition of the kingdom, recommended an inland arsenal at Cannock Chase, Staffordshire, in the centre of the network of railways and canals, and well retired from the coast, so that if Woolwich were destroyed, the country might have another arsenal. The work has not yet been commenced.

Those who object to fortification, might do well to study the famous letter addressed by Lord Overstone to the Royal Commission in 1860, when asked to favour them with his views 'as to the immediate effect upon the commercial and monetary affairs of this country that would follow the landing of an invading army, without reference to its ultimate success.' His lordship replied: 'I cannot contemplate or trace to its consequences such a supposition as that London be occupied by an invading army. My only answer is: *It must never be.* Under the most favourable supposition, the general confusion and ruin

which the presence of a hostile army on British soil must produce, will be such that it would be absolute madness on the part of the government and people of this country were they to omit any possible measure of precaution, or to shrink from any present sacrifice, by which the occurrence of such a catastrophe may be rendered impossible. The limited extent of the country would seriously restrict our means of protracted defence. The immense amount of our accumulated capital would afford to the enemy the ready means of levying his heavy exactions. The complicated and very delicate network of credit which overlies all the multitudinous transactions of the country, would vibrate throughout upon the first touch of our soil by a foreign invader, and would, in all probability, be subject to a sudden and fearful collapse; while the confusion and distress produced among the labouring classes would be truly fearful. Millions of our labouring population depend for their daily maintenance upon trading and manufacturing enterprise, the vital principle of which is the undisturbed state of public order, confidence, and credit.'

VALENTINE STRANGE.

A STORY OF THE PRIMROSE WAY.

CHAPTER XXIII.—RUNNING AWAY FROM DISHONOUR.

VAL STRANGE sat alone in a smoking-carriage in a train bound for Southampton, and whither he might go from that starting-point, he neither knew nor cared. One place was likely to be as blank and empty as another for many a year to come, he thought, and the world held nothing worth doing or seeing or thinking about. He was sore against himself, for it seemed only his own blunder which had driven him away. He was angry with Gilbert for having betrayed his confidence, and angry with himself for having put it in his power to do so. He confessed that if he had warned Gilbert, the secret would have been safe in his hands; and he was very angry about his own stupidity. Once or twice his heart told him, 'It is better as it is;' but on the whole it was not wonderful that this reflection had little power to soothe him. Reginald's declaration about their being 'both men of honour,' hit him hard. He had been honourable once, and he would have scorned in another the action which he himself had taken. He had planned to undermine his friend in the affections of his plighted wife. That was the plain English of the business, and black enough it looked when set forth simply so. But then came his excuses. Egotism, parent of dishonour and crime, put forth her plea. *He loved, he suffered, he would be miserable for life.* Not even yet had Egotism power to blind him altogether, and he saw that there were two sides to this, as to most other matters. Gerard loved, not so deeply as himself perhaps; for who could credit that?—but still he loved her, beyond doubt, because no man could help it. And Gerard, if robbed of her,

would suffer too, though he would learn to live it down. Wonderful how easy it seemed, how likely it seemed—this learning to live it down—in the other man's case; how bitterly hopeless and dreary a prospect it presented in his own. This faculty of seeing your own side big, and other people's little, it is which makes wars, breeds hatreds, fills jails, and feeds the scaffold. The immortal precept which bids man love his neighbour as himself, aims a blow at crime, which, if it took effect, were fatal; for it strikes egotism dead; and the thief would no longer steal, if he, ignorant, vicious, and ugly, could be brought to know that the philanthropist his victim, lovely in men's sight, learned and pious, has claims upon the world which are equal to his own. But he dreams not of it, and does not indeed properly realise any other human creature's existence. Other men are not alive to us, and therefore we injure or neglect them. They go about, assuredly, and conduct business, and marry wives, and rear children, and what not; but it is only *you* who are really alive in the middle of these *simulacra*, only *you* who love thus passionately, who suffer thus profoundly, who dream thus loftily. It was not only the half-cured blind man in Palestine who saw men but as trees walking.

Even in our bitterest hours we do things which are habitual to us. Val's cigar-case was his one source of comfort at all vacuous times, and he went to it now. Mechanically he drew it from its place, mechanically chose a cigar, mechanically felt in his pockets for a vesta. First here, and then there, his fingers strayed, until his mind woke up and took part in the task. The little silver box was lost, or left behind, and it became suddenly a matter of the gravest importance that poor Val should smoke. And here was a twenty miles' run before him without a pause, and no chance of a whiff for an eternity of at least five-and-twenty minutes. Cruel Fate! His anger at this circumstance became at length comic to himself, and he took to chaffing himself dearly about it; but he looked half-a-score times out of the window for the station within that score of miles, and consulted his watch again and again. Time had never seemed to hang more heavily. The train reached the station at last, and Val's carriage stopped opposite a refreshment-room. He leaped from his place to the platform. 'No time here, sir,' an official on the platform warned him. 'All right,' cried Val; and dashing into the refreshment-room, called for a box of vestas, and being most leisurely supplied by the superior person in charge of the place, rushed back again to find the train in motion. 'Here you are, sir!' cried the guard; and he made a dash for the carriage-door held open. The guard slammed it noisily behind him, and he had re-caught the train by a fraction of a second. But this was not his carriage, and indeed not a smoking-compartment at all; and to make matters worse, it was occupied by a lady in mourning, who sat veiled in one corner. Val within himself spoke evil of the guard, and greatly fumed and fretted. The night was cold, his rugs were in the other carriage, and their sudden loss rendered him doubly susceptible to the chilly air.

'Ugh!' said the ill-used creature, folding his overcoat about his legs and settling himself in his corner as comfortably as he could. Just then a sound struck his ear which made him worse content than ever. The lady in the corner was crying, sobbing outright as if her heart would break. 'More misery,' said Val to himself, as though it injured him that his fellow-passenger should be unhappy. But he was naturally soft-hearted, and could not bear the sight of any other creature's trouble, least of all a woman's; and seeing how the whole slight figure heaved and shook with grief, he felt a swift touch of pity, and half involuntarily moved towards her.

'I beg your pardon, madam,' said Val, baring his head, 'but you are in trouble. Can I do anything for you?'

The poor thing only wept the more; but by-and-by stealing a look at him from under her veil, saw a handsome face full of pity looking at her with tender and troubled interest. 'I have lost my father,' said a girlish voice, so broken with sobs that it took half a minute to say it.—Val looked at the deep mourning in which she was dressed, and nodded sympathetically.—'No,' she sobbed anew, reading his glance; 'that is for my mother. I have lost my father at the railway station.'

'Oh!' said he, 'your father was travelling with you?'

'Yes,' she said. 'The train started, and left him behind.'

'Oh,' said Val; 'he will come on by the next train. You mustn't be alarmed.' She was quite a child, if he could judge from her figure, her voice, and this abandonment of grief at so small a disaster. 'Allow me to take care of you. How far are you going?'

'To Sou-Sou-Southampton,' she said, and burst out crying anew, as though that made it worse than ever.

'Will anybody meet you there?' asked Val. 'Have you friends in Southampton?'

'No,' she answered.

'Never mind,' said Val soothingly. 'It will all come smooth by-and-by. Papa will come on by the next train; and you must stop at an hotel to-night, and meet the train in the morning.' This programme seemed perfectly satisfactory to him; and his voice and face did something to comfort the girl, though what he said did little. She put up her veil after a time; and he saw that she was somewhat older than he had fancied, and pretty in spite of her flushed cheeks and tearful eyes.

'But,' she said, looking piteously at Val, 'I ought to have a ticket?'

'O yes,' said Val, 'you ought to have a ticket.'—And she wept anew.—'Never mind,' he said again. 'Don't cry. You can pay at Southampton.'

'But,' she sobbed, in the simplicity of grief, 'I haven't got any money!'

'Oh,' said Val, 'you haven't any money? Never mind. Don't cry.—Hillo! Here's another station.—Excuse me for a moment.' Out he ran; and accosting his servant, who was seated in an adjoining carriage, ordered him to transfer his belongings. He handed one of his rugs to his companion, and bestowed the other on himself; and he comforted her with sherry and sandwiches

until she began to cry quite contentedly, and after a long time ceased to cry at all, only the waves could not settle at once, and a sob rose now and again. It was evident that she was not exactly a lady, and evident also that she was amazingly ignorant of the world. She was very frightened at the tunnels and bridges with their sudden deafening roar; and Val's kindly comments on this alarm of hers elicited the fact that she had never travelled by rail before. When, before entering the terminal station, they were called upon for their tickets, she permitted Val to pay for her journey with no more remembrance than a wistful look conveyed. She stood on the Southampton platform a few minutes later, and gazed about her in pure bewilderment and terror, clinging to Val's arm. 'Here,' said Val, looking back into the carriage, 'you have forgotten your bag. Have you any luggage?'

'I have a box,' she answered, accepting the black bag from Val's hand; and away she went by his side to the luggage-van; and the box being extricated and recognised, her protector rather enjoying the situation, led her to an hotel, ordered a room for her, and had a cup of tea sent up to her. He promised to meet her at breakfast in the morning, and then sat down in a private room and smoked his fill, and was miserable. The fact of having done something for a fellow-creature in trouble was not without its comfort for him; but he came back to his own griefs. Going away, an exile, leaving love behind! That millions had suffered so before, was no salve to his sore heart. Running away from dishonour—that was something!—but his will was not in it. He would have stayed behind, had he taken his choice, and have drawn Love to his bosom though she brought dishonour with her. And that was a sad condition for a man to have come to. He had still enough honour left to see the disgrace to which he had been hurrying. 'Thy grace being gained'—he was sitting with the sealed envelope, which held Constance's portrait, in his hand, and so had the line before him—'cures all disgrace in me.' He knew that he would have to travel far before he could find a poorer sophistry than that. His conscience scorned it as a pun with no meaning; but Will hugged it, and tried hard to believe in it. It was significant of some power above himself, that he laid down the envelope without opening it, as he longed to do.

Meantime, Hiram's little sweetheart slept soundly, and dreamed of Hiram, and of this wonderful, kind, good, new creature who had come into her life, and had been so generous. I do not believe that she had ever conversed with a gentleman until that evening, and she had been somewhat in awe of his splendours—the magnificent diamond on his white finger, his eyeglass, his moustaches, his little pointed sixteenth-century beard, his fine clothes; for Val was always a dressy man, though he never overdid the thing. And then he had made absolutely nothing of money, of ever so much money, and he kept a manservant, who dressed as well as Hiram, and looked almost as grand. The hotel was such a building as she had never seen, except from the outside; and the furniture, and the waiters, and the chambermaid all rather overwhelmed her untravelled spirit. But she bestowed herself in the

big bed with a combined sense of adventure and luxury, and was fast asleep in a few minutes, and slept indeed until the chambermaid's knock aroused her. She looked neat and pretty in her plain black dress, and spotless cuffs and collars of white linen; but she shrank inwardly to think that only ladies had a right to be in so magnificent a place as this, and reflected with sadness that ladies always went habited in silken gorgiosities, with gold chains and real lace and other marvels about them. She ventured out into the vast hotel corridor, and its waste silence frightened her so much that she retreated, and felt so utterly lonely and deserted, that the tears of last night were almost on flow again, when with a little dictatorial knock the chambermaid entered and said that breakfast was ready. So Mary meekly followed the chambermaid, who led her once more into Val's presence. Let it be recorded to his credit that he had on this occasion surrendered one of his own specially-beloved habits. He disliked crowds and *tables-d'hôte*, and being rich enough to secure privacy wherever he went, had strengthened native tendency by habit, until a public eating-place was hateful to him. Breakfast, in especial, was a meal he liked to lounge over in privacy, in dressing-gown and slippers. But thinking wisely that the girl would rather be spared a *tête-à-tête*, and that her present position—alone, and with a male protector who was a stranger—demanded all possible delicacy of treatment, he ordered breakfast for two in the coffee-room; and thither she was shown. The breakfast service hit the untravelled maiden hard—the cut-glass and the bright electro-plate, and the dish-covers. There were well-dressed people of both sexes in the room, and the room itself was large, lofty, and richly papered and corniced. She sat down in a tremor at all this, and Val had some little trouble in putting her completely at ease. Not that there was any open sign of *gaucherie* or ill-breeding about her—she would have passed for a lady with wonderfully little practice. After breakfast, Val took her to meet the early train; but no Garling came by it, for the best of reasons—or the worst. She told him with childlike *naïveté* all her little story, if you except the fact of Hiram; and Val learned that she had lived all her life with the mother whom she had so lately lost, poor thing, and had worked this last three years as a milliner in the City. She was not at all clear about Garling, but supposed he had been away abroad—vaguely, and had only lately returned.

'And you don't know where he was coming to—in Southampton?' her companion asked.

'No,' she answered falteringly.

'And he doesn't know where to send to you?'

'No,' she said again. Val pondered as they went back from the station together. Was this mere child purposely thrown loose upon the world? Wicked things than even that were done every day, and it was quite possible.

'Where does your father live?' he asked her. But as this question evidently embarrassed the girl, Val proceeded on another tack.

'Do you know anybody else in London who would take care of you?' he inquired.

'O yes,' she said, brightening a little to think of Hiram. If she could only reach Hiram, she was safe.

'Had you not better send a message and go back?'

'I can't send a message,' she faltered; 'I don't know the address.'

'Can you find the address?' he demanded.

'No,' she answered; 'but I can find him. He conducts an omnibus, and it goes up and down Cheapside.'

'Oh!' said Val, with a curious glance at her. 'He conducts an omnibus, does he? And it goes up and down Cheapside? Very well, then. And you are quite sure of being safe, if you find him?'

'O yes,' she cried, with so much certainty, that Val read the whole thing at once.

'Very well,' he responded. 'You had better go back to London. Do you know what to do with your luggage when you get to the station?'—She knew nothing.—'I never met such an unsophisticated little creature in my life before,' he said to himself. He explained to her how to leave her luggage at the cloak-room, and to take a ticket for it; and next he sought out the station-master, and told him where to send any inquirer who might come from London on the outlook for a daughter. To be brief, he saw her away by the next train, Garling still being absent from the scene; and having paid for her ticket, he bestowed her in a carriage, committed her to the care of the guard, and slipped a five-pound note into her hand as the train moved off. His manly kindness to this poor waif of fortune thawed his own numbed heart awhile, and then he went away and forgot her. She never forgot him—it was scarcely possible that she should forget so notable a figure in her small life-history. She was faithful to Hiram; but a wonderful sort of worshipping admiration surrounded the kindly and generous stranger in her thoughts. Faithful to Hiram? Val no more disturbed her faith than if he had been a creature from another sphere, a conventional angel, or some other such wonderful wild-fowl. But she remembered him, alike with gratitude and affection, and eagerly repaid him when the time came. And it was not her fault if the service she rendered him went towards his own undoing; but his, who chose the service for her.

The weather was growing mild, and in the country places, Spring was stealing up apace, working all her yearly miracles by the way. The air grew balmy, and the sky clear. 'What does it matter to me where I go?' said Val desperately. The open sea would somehow be in tune with his mood, he fancied; and so he shipped for the West Indies, after lounging for an uneasy day or two at Southampton; but speeding towards the Islands of Spice over a sea and under a heaven which grew daily more lovely, he found no peace of heart. He wrote before starting one brief letter to Reginald, in which every line breathed recklessness and despair. He had locked Constance's portrait in the largest of his trunks, and had it buried in the ship's hold, without much avail, since it haunted him through the long empty hours of a smooth and uneventful passage. Perhaps this voyage was as mistaken a remedy as he could anyhow have indulged in. He had nothing to do except to smoke and moon about the decks and

think of Constance and his own unhappiness. His fellow-passengers were few and disagreeable. They comprised a Jewish lady who had been handsome, and remembered what had been so clearly, that she had no perception for the present, but dressed and ogled eagerly for Val's delight: a beady-eyed boy of twelve, her son, who had been at school in England, and was, from a combination of causes, downright intolerable: a ponderous British person, who oiled his hair, wore crumpled linen, and much flash jewellery, and spread dirty hands on the dinner-table to have his rings admired: and a couple of British youths fresh from school, who were going out to a sugar estate in Jamaica. These young gentlemen being newly liberated from the restraints of civilisation, drank brandy-and-water all day long, and smoked, by way of announcing the complete attainment of the rights of man, the vilest Cavendish to be got for love or money. The condition of Val's mind was such that these people one and all became hateful to him. They were not nice people, and under any circumstances he would have chosen their room rather than their company; but now they seemed to inspire him with a disgust of all his species. For the first time in his life, he was morose for a week together; and being forced inward, he fed upon his own heart, and found it innutritive and spiritually unpalatable. He was so far gone, that he never once brought himself steadily to contemplate this as a final parting from Constance, and when that view of the journey insisted on being faced, he put it away from him savagely. He was going away—that was enough, surely. He was already absent and in pain; why torture himself needlessly? Slowly but surely, his mind began to slide back to the contemplation of an immediate return. It was clear enough that if he ventured upon such a course, it must be pursued secretly and without Reginald's knowledge; and thus he found himself pledged to crooked courses at every succeeding stage. This journey began to assume the aspect of a penance voluntarily undertaken, and turning out to be unavailing. Val found it anything but easy or pleasant to be a scoundrel; he was so unfortunately susceptible of popular opinion, so anxious to stand well with all men, and to have the good opinion even of strangers. This feeling operated now so decidedly, that even when he had determined to return, he would not go back by the ship in which he had made the outward voyage, lest the captain and the crew should think him an uncertain vacillating fellow who did not know his mind, and was moving vacuously for no purpose about the world. He even made a pretence of business to his servant, whilst awaiting the departure of the next homeward-bound vessel, to conciliate his good opinion. Excuses were not lacking for him, as he steamed homeward. He had gone away, and found it impossible to remain. Perhaps, after all, circumstances might hold him apart from Constance. Perhaps, even—so monstrous a shape could self-delusion take—he might see more of her, and become disillusionised. Val Strange was not a fool by nature, and yet he accepted even this preposterous pretence of an excuse, and persuaded himself that it was probable.

He reached England, and journeyed back to London. But town was growing full, and he was afraid of observation, and avoided his clubs and his old companions. He nevertheless contrived to learn that Constance had returned with her father and brother to the Grange, and moved by some desperate impulse, ran down to Ryde, where his yacht was lying, and sailed for Welbeck Head, in the mad hope that somehow he might get a glimpse of her. Before he sighted the Head, he had been absent from Constance six weeks, and in that time great events had taken place.

ROD AND LINE IN NORTH UIST.

THE picturesque and varied scenery of the steamer's route by Colonsay and Iona, through the intricacies of the Inner Hebrides, goes far to relieve the tedium of a trip to Lochmaddy by the *Dunara Castle*. It is a long journey, even if the shorter passage from Oban be selected; and yet, once landed at the principal port of North Uist, and domesticated in the homely but comfortable inn, built by the proprietor near the steamboat quay, the enthusiastic angler will soon forget the fatigues of his travel in anticipations of the sport which the island undoubtedly affords. The immediate surroundings, on his stepping on shore, may indeed be hardly up to his expectations; for Lochmaddy itself has suffered, in common with other celebrated localities, from having been depicted, in the past, in colours more glowing than truthful by some of its admirers who ought to have known better. If the visitor expects to find on arrival a small but flourishing township at the head of the spacious harbour, he will be disappointed. Although the seat of a sheriff-substitute, it is in nowise like Stornoway; it does not even rival in dimensions the neighbouring Tarbert in Harris; for in sober reality there is very little of Lochmaddy altogether; only about a score of houses, and even these not arranged in the form of a row or street, but each planted at a considerable distance from its neighbour, as if they feared to come into close contact. It is reported that a tourist once, after landing, ascended a neighbouring eminence, to ascertain if the veritable Lochmaddy were not hidden somewhere in the background; but he was disappointed. He had seen all that presently is to be seen; unless, indeed, he possessed the gift of second-sight, and obtained a glimpse of the Lochmaddy of the future, the successful rival of Stornoway and Portree.

Here, however, our angler, if intent on sport, must not make up his mind to linger; for the lochs in the immediate neighbourhood, though numerous enough, will not be found of the best description. It will be better for him at once to make the journey across the breadth of the island to the western shore, and to take up his quarters at or near the village of Tigharry, by road about seventeen miles, where, in default of better lodgings, he will find a very humble hostelry. On this coast, where the great majority of the population reside, and where the ground is more extensively cultivated, the fishing-waters will best repay a visit. It is only after leaving Lochmaddy behind, and striking across country by road, that any idea can be formed of the

enormous water-area of the island. The whole interior is then seen to be intersected in every direction with numberless lochs, and also with long salt-water creeks and inlets penetrating for miles. To a stranger, it appears as if the whole of the low-lying ground had been submerged with some mighty rainfall. The lochs are on every hand and of all sizes, from the merest pools to long silent stretches of water, dappled with fairy islets, and losing themselves in the windings of the hills. The diversified hill-scenery of the centre of North Uist alone preserves the landscape from a dreary monotony, as the whole country is absolutely treeless. How much the general effect is here relieved by the mountain ranges, may be seen by visiting the southern island of Benbecula, where the watery and swampy soil is crowned with the single hill from which the name of the locality is derived. In this latter district the land seems in the winter season to form only a series of bridges over the prevailing water, and much of the interior being considerably under the sea-level, is subject to frequent floods at high tides. Professor Blackie's unpublished lines on Benbecula seem truly appropriate to this melancholy region :

A thrice-forsaken, thrice-deserted land,
Where ducks contest with men the doubtful strand.

But let us return to North Uist, with its less sombre landscape. One disadvantage to the angling stranger of this bewildering extent of loch scenery is that, unless provided with an experienced guide to bring him to the most celebrated fishings, he might spend at any rate the better part of a whole season in endeavouring to discover them for himself. He would also find from experience that certain chains of lochs are better for sport at one time than at another; that whole districts, in fact, may be assigned to the early months of the year, and others to the later. The sea-trout streams and waters might also escape his notice altogether. Presuming, however, that he has obtained the indispensable permission to angle from the resident factor to Sir John Orde, he may gain from that gentleman sufficient directions for his start. For the rest, he must trust to his own judgment and skill. Perhaps in these notes he may find some finger-posts for his way.

A very exceptional and favourable characteristic of the lochs in North Uist is that a great number of them can be fished without much difficulty either from the shore, or at the cost of a little wading. Stone dikes, built as cattle-boundaries, have in many places anciently been erected on the banks, and their remains often stretch a considerable distance into the water, forming short and irregular piers, which serve admirably the angler's purpose, and give him command over considerable stretches of surface. This is a matter of no small importance in a place where boats are not often to be met with on the fresh water. Another desideratum is found in the strikingly irregular nature of the loch-margins, and the numerous natural promontories which abut from the shores.

Perched on a rough seat of stones at the extremity of one of these rocky points, the Hebridean native may often be seen patiently fishing for trout with a rudely-constructed rod,

and a line tied to the point of it. He generally despises the artificial fly with its scientific accompaniments, preferring the indigenous worm, which he never places on the hook without a preliminary incantation of a salivary nature—a custom the origin of which is lost in antiquity. He expects only the smaller trout of these waters to come to the bait; and generally he is not disappointed. His patience being inexhaustible, he will sit on his cairn from dawn to dusk for the expected basketful. Should he, however, be fishing in a sea-trout loch and at the proper season, his lure may perchance be visited in a most violent manner by some stray monster fresh from the sea, who, with one mad rush, makes short work of the homely tackle. This is no slight misfortune to the native angler, whose whole stock is generally in active service; so he resignedly departs; never disappointed at losing 'the big fish'—he never dreamed of securing it—but resolved to seek again another and a quieter scene for his labours. The occasional sea-trout to him is a calamity, unforeseen and unavoidable, which he is thankful to escape from on any terms, and even at considerable sacrifice!

The trout of the island are of three varieties: first, the common black trout of the burns and lochs, generally of average size, but in some waters attaining great weight. These are obtainable from March to October, but are best in the earlier months. Secondly, there are the yellow trout, in some instances forming the only denizens of a loch—notably Balleloch, in Tigharry district; and in others to be found along with the black trout. They have been caught up to six pounds-weight. Lastly, there are the sea-trout, which ascend three or four short streams in the island, generally about the second week of September, and are sport for rod and line till the end of October. There are no true salmon in North Uist; but sea-trout are found in the following streams: Loch-na-Ciste, near Lochmaddy; Horasary and adjoining stream, south of Paible on the west; Mullanagereen, on the north-east, near Solas; and a fourth, not officially recognised, Arivichrurie, to the north of the last-named. At least one of these is understood to be strictly reserved for the proprietor's personal sport. At any one of them, in a fair season, the finest sport may be obtained, the fish running up to eight and even ten pounds in weight. The streams are very short and narrow, and the best sport is generally obtained in the lochs above.

Taking the western shore of the island—the side from which the magnificent prospect is obtained of the South Uist hills, with Barra to the south, and St Kilda looming in the dimmest north-west distance, with the Heisker Islets in the centre—it will be found that the extent of the road circling the island, between the hamlet of Clachan on the south, and Tigharry, our imaginary headquarters, on the north, some nine miles altogether, lies alongside of the best fishing-lochs in North Uist. As a general rule, the various sheets of water on a level with and below this road on either side will be found the earliest and at the same time the most favourite haunts of the yellow trout. On the grounds rising to the central hill-range, the lochs are larger, but stocked

with smaller trout, and later in the season. In the Paible district, two miles south of Tigharry, the lochs are unexceptionable both on the landward and seaward side of the road. Horasary, the finest of the sea-trout waters, is south of Paible. Loch Mhiran—the names are all Gaelic—an insignificant sheet of water in this district, affords magnificent yellow trout of four to six pounds-weight, although the fish are shy on account of the great clearness of the water.

In Balleloch, near Tigharry, we have enjoyed many days fine sport through the courtesy of the parish minister, who rents the fishing in it and keeps a boat for angling. From these lower waters the angler can find his way by numerous peat-roads striking inland, to the hill-lochs proper, generally edged with peat-moss, and filled with inferior fish. The more remote lochs again, in the centre of the island, within the hill-ranges, are, generally speaking, worthy of only a stray visit. The difficulty of tracing their interminable windings, and the uncertainty of good sport in them, contribute to this. The very largest sheets of water it is not worth while to attempt, unless with a boat; they are as a rule teeming with fish, but of small size; while, on the other hand, and more especially is this true of the seaward lochs on the west side, the most uninviting and shallow pieces of water, if reed-fringed and weedy, often contain large and fine fish. Numbers of these lakelets can be waded from side to side waist-high. In a shallow, marshy loch close to Paible Free Church, the writer has frequently landed yellow trout of large size and surpassing quality.

As to the merits of particular lochs, which it is impossible here to enumerate even by name, a good deal of information can generally be obtained from the people of the district. Allowance must be made, however, for the hyperbolic Gaelic. In many instances also, an unfortunate desire 'to please the Sassenach' with a favourable report is mixed up with a regard to strict truthfulness; and in the case of the older inhabitants, information is often derived from hearsay or from experience considerably out of date. We remember trusting on one occasion to the testimony of an aged individual of unquestioned integrity, regarding the merits of a far inland loch, of which he spoke in the highest terms. It was, we were told, difficult of access—about thirteen miles stiff moor and hill travelling on foot; but the sport reported was so tempting, that we determined to essay the journey, with the help of a rough sketch of the intricate loch-windings, with which our adviser furnished us. Our start was a very early one, on a May morning; and he accompanied us a short distance on the way. We were cautioned that we would find only an insignificant loch in appearance, but the fish were said to be the largest in the island. The last time our guide had fished it, his basket was almost too weighty to carry. 'How long may it be,' we hesitatingly inquired, 'since you were last there?' 'Just the year,' he replied, 'before the Disruption! It was admirable then!' It was too late to retreat. In the evening twilight, three limping figures, with a thoroughly worn-out and dispirited dog, found their way home. We had discovered the loch indeed; and the result of a day's labours in its waters—untroubled, we suppose, since the

date of the great ecclesiastical controversy of 1843—was a solitary and sable trout of some six pounds with a gaunt and pike-like head. We vaguely associated him with 'The Ten Years' Conflict' and the 'survival of the fittest.'

The Gaelic proverb has it that the dryshod fisherman has but an empty basket, a sufficient warning to dilettanti anglers not to attempt Hebridean sport. It is a very different thing from fishing in a punt on the Thames at Richmond. Perhaps the most bracing and exciting variety of it may be found in September just before the sea-trout ascend to the fresh water. For days and even weeks beforehand they have been lying in large salt-water pools on the sea-shore, left by the tide at low water, waiting for a 'spate' of rain to enable them to ascend the streams with safety. Some of these pools inside of the outlying island of Kirkibost are of great extent and depth; but owing to the transparency of the water, they are only to be fished with profit when ruffled by a strong wind. Under these conditions, when loch-fishing is impracticable owing to stormy weather, the sea-pools may be attempted with good results. The fish are of course fresh from the sea, or rather not yet out of it, and are in first-class condition and very game. Anything more exhilarating than this fishing on the windy shore, in the purple depths of an unfathomed pool, can hardly be conceived.

A word as to the angler's outfit for these regions. It should include at least two rods, one of grilse size with more than the usual complement of top joints. The writer has invariably used the fine hemp lines. A pair of wading trousers, &c., is essential. The most useful flies will be found in the smaller loch varieties, with the *roughest* dressing obtainable, and preferably silver tinselled for the smaller trout; the larger sizes of drake, speckled teal, and dun wings, with scarlet, blue, and yellow bodies for the yellow trout, along with a selection of dragon-flies, grubs, and creepers. For the sea-trout sport in September, the most killing fly, without exception, will be found in the red-hackled spider dressed with scarlet and gold. Other flies may be used, including black palmer with silver, but the above is *the fly par excellence*. It has generally been found advisable on the sea-trout lochs of this island to fish with two or even three flies on the cast, instead of the customary single one. One thing regarding all flies used in this locality is noticeable, that the more bristling and hairy the dressing the more attractive the lure; and, as another generalisation, the hooks may be a shade smaller than those in common use elsewhere for the same size of fish.

OUR FRENCH PROFESSOR.

CHAPTER III.—CONCLUSION.

I LEFT Wimbourne Hall without bidding Emily farewell, as she was away on a visit. De Montgris wished me *bon voyage* with apparent cordiality, and Dr Walters begged me to make use of any influence he had to further my career. So, the dream was over; and Emily White was to be only a bright agony haunting me for the rest of my life. I did not know that she cared for me more than for others equally far from her path

through the world. A look, a little sigh, a kind hand-grasp, may mean anything or nothing. One thing was now clear to me—that we should be henceforth strangers, our fates as uncommingled as though we had lived in long-divided epochs of time. Work must fill up my existence now; ambition, and not love, be my guiding-star.

On reaching home, I put away my violin out of sight, and I buried myself in the hardest problems of logic and mathematics. I would go in for the highest prizes of academic fame, and let Dr Walters hear of me by brilliant reports of success in the newspapers. For about a fortnight I acted up to my resolution with Spartan fortitude, and then there came a flood of events, which swept me into other and very different channels of activity.

First was a letter from my friend the medical student at Paris, explaining the cause of his long delay in replying to my communication, he having been on a cruise to Alexandria on board a French gunboat. Since his return to Paris, he had been to the Prefecture of Police; but had heard nothing, official reserve forbidding any information. He interpreted this to mean that De Montgris was unknown to the guardians of public safety. As I had terminated all connection with Wimbourne Hall and its inmates, I was rather glad that my inquiry had ended in nothing.

Three days after the arrival of my friend's letter, a gentleman called upon me, who was plainly a Frenchman, though he spoke English almost as well as myself. He put a number of oblique questions to me respecting Dr Walters, the school, and its inmates. I answered them; and then very bluntly began to ask what was the purpose of the interview. He looked at me keenly, as only a wary policeman can; then, with a half-smile, explained his errand. He had been sent from Paris to make inquiries respecting a certain M. De Montgris, and was acting under instructions from the Consul.

The upshot was that I had a long interview with certain French and English officials. The same evening I started for Wimbourne Hall with two companions. We spent the night at the village hotel; and after breakfast next morning, I went alone to the Hall to make inquiries. The family, I was told, had gone to a garden-party a few miles away, and were not expected home until late.

Mrs Elphinstone was fond of talking, and poured out a copious stream of domestic trifles in response to my interrogatories. Miss White was not so well; but naturally, a young lady in her position must feel a little anxious.

'What do you mean, Mrs Elphinstone?' I demanded with some alarm.

'Why, you know, it is a trying thing to go to live with strangers, however much you may like them afterwards. Not but she ought to be proud after all.'

'Do explain, Mrs Elphinstone,' I cried impatiently.

She rebuked me with a dignified wave of her

fat hand, for she liked to keep undermasters at their proper distance. Then, solemnly: 'Miss White is going to be married, and be made a Markis.'

'A what?'

'A Markis,' she said again, with marked emphasis.

'But who is he?' I asked.

'Why, Monsieur De Montgris, to be sure. He is a Markis too.'

Although I had a certain assurance that such would be Mrs Elphinstone's reply, it nevertheless staggered me.

The good housekeeper believing me reduced to a fitting state of respectful attention, went on: 'Ah! Miss Emily will be a grand lady soon, for Monsieur is going to get back all his estates. He told me so himself. What a real gentleman he is! so polite, and so clever. If I was Miss Emily I should dote on him; and he ought to be proud of her too. She is a good and kind young lady, and not without money of her own. If it had not been for her, Monsieur might have had to wait many a year for his property and rights.'

'What has she done?' I asked, struck by these latter remarks.

'A part of her fortune will help Monsieur to pay the lawyers that have been such rogues to the poor gentleman. At least, so I hear. Of course I don't know everything.'

'Where is Monsieur De Montgris now?'

'Why, at the garden-party with Miss Emily. Where else should he be?'

At this time a servant came in to say that a foreign man was at the door asking for M. De Montgris. I thought it was one of my companions, and followed the servant. But I was in error. I found a strange, shabby, disconcerted-looking man, who seemed to have gone through much recent hardship.

Mrs Elphinstone asked what he wanted; and in almost unintelligible English, he said he wanted M. De Montgris. Nothing else could be got out of him. At length I spoke to him in French, which startled him, and at first increased his reserve. Then he began to talk about the importance of his visit to De Montgris. In fact, he must see him, and at once.

There was something so singular in the man's looks and behaviour, that I did not hesitate to direct Mrs Elphinstone to show him into a room and offer him some refreshment, as a friend of De Montgris. He seemed ready to drop with exhaustion and anxiety.

But the housekeeper had a prejudice against all shabbily dressed people, and refused to offer any hospitality unless I would sit in the room with the man. He might be a dangerous impostor, and there were only a few women about the Hall.

So I went with him into the still-room, where he was soon supplied with some cold meat and bread. He fell on the food like a wolf, tearing the meat with his fingers. In five minutes he had cleared the table. One thing surprised me—he kept his hat on, a quite unusual thing for a Frenchman when invited indoors. It was a burning August morning, and the sun was pouring into the room. The meal had made him perspire; but he kept his battered old wide-awake tight over his brows.

'Will you not take off your hat?' I said, annoyed at his rudeness.

He cast a quick uneasy glance at me, hesitated a moment; then pulled his hair over his forehead, smoothing it with his hand, and finally placed his cap in his pocket.

I thought him an odd fellow; but as I wished to know something of the reason that had brought him to Wimbourne Hall, I put on the most indifferent look, and drew a travelling flask from my pocket, thinking a dose of brandy might lessen his reserve. It did. He was not long in emptying it. I gave him a cigar, which he smoked with extraordinary zest. Indeed, this evidently gave him more pleasure than anything he had before received. The hard, distressed haggardness began to pass from his face, as he inhaled the tobacco rather than smoked it. Soon we were chattering familiarly about the general superiority of France to England. All at once the man stopped the current of patriotic admiration, saying with bitterness: 'All Frenchmen are egoists—each for himself. There is no fidelity, no friendship amongst us.' He grew excited, and struck the table a savage blow, as though he were hitting an enemy. Then he turned hastily towards me, which made his cap fall out of his pocket. He picked it up. In stooping, the lank hair parted on his brow, and I saw that it was marked with a curious red patch, a sort of birth-stain.

'Is Monsieur De Montgris an egoist?' I said with a cynical smile.

The man jumped up as though I had insulted him. 'Egoist! Look you, that De Montgris, as he is called, is selfishness incarnate. He has driven me mad with anxiety and misery. But I will be quits with him just now. I will starve no more alone.' Then recollecting himself, he sat down as suddenly as he had risen, and fixed his eyes moodily upon the floor. He refused to talk further, saying that he was worn out with fatigue, and must sleep for a little while. The food and drink were beginning to have their usual effects upon an exhausted and-hungry man. It was impossible to leave him in the house after my departure, and yet I wanted him to remain until I had communicated with those waiting for me at the village inn. I therefore took him to the stable, and bid him lie down in an empty stall, promising him that De Montgris should come to him as soon as he returned.

An hour afterwards, one of my companions was coolly surveying the sleeping vagrant, who lay as still as a man under the influence of a powerful opiate. His lank, grisly hair had fallen aside, and exposed his forehead to the light. I shall never forget the sight of that brow, grotesquely dabbled with purple stains.

'It is *Peau-rouge*,' said the French police agent, quietly locking the stable-door. 'We are more than fortunate.'

I never passed through such a feverish time as the hours which intervened between mid-day and dusk, when Dr Walters, Emily, and De Montgris returned.

The Doctor came to the library, where I awaited him with an official from the Home Office. He was surprised at the seriousness of my greeting.

'I am here on a painful and embarrassing errand, Doctor. It is about Monsieur De Montgris.'

'What do you mean, sir?' he said haughtily, 'Monsieur De Montgris is a gentleman of the highest respectability, and I refuse to hear anything said of him, unless he is present'—

'He will have the fullest opportunity to refute all that is alleged against him, Dr Walters,' interposed the official, stepping forward; 'but it is your duty to hear me first.'

'Who are you, sir?' demanded the Doctor with pompous anger.

'One of Her Majesty's servants. My business is to arrest the person called De Montgris, *alias* Barbier.'

'How dare you say such impertinence to me?' cried the Doctor with incredulous disdain. 'You are labouring under a most absurd mistake.—Mr Bevan,' turning to me, 'your conduct is infamous!'

I would have made a sharp rejoinder; but the official put me aside, saying: 'Dr Walters, I must ask you to limit this interview to its proper purport. Here is my warrant for the apprehension of this man.'

The Doctor read it, then flung it down with supreme contempt. 'I must have better evidence than this before I permit the hospitality of my house to be violated, even in the name of the Queen. I have the amplest proofs of Monsieur De Montgris' integrity and social position. He is a nobleman, and will soon come into possession of one of the finest properties in Normandy. You really are most absurdly deceived.'

'I repeat, Dr Walters, that this so-called De Montgris is named Barbier, an escaped convict from Toulon, one of the most daring and able of the desperadoes of France.'

The Doctor waved his hand impatiently, and smiled at the official with lofty scorn. 'I have what you cannot confute by all the accusations in the world,' he said. 'I have the title-deeds of Monsieur De Montgris' estates locked up in that safe;' pointing to a corner of the room.

'Will you allow me to see them?' asked the official.

The Doctor hastily opened the safe, and laid a bundle of parchments and papers upon the table, saying with sneering exultation: 'I hope this will end the farce.'

For several minutes the official looked over the documents, then folded them into a neat packet and placed them in his breast-pocket. 'This completes my case, Dr Walters. These papers were stolen by Barbier from the real Monsieur De Montgris.'

It was a heavy blow. The Doctor sank under it. 'Give me particulars of this terrible affair,' he said faintly.

'The man Barbier,' replied my companion, taking a seat near the Doctor, 'is the son of a respectable merchant at Rouen. He was educated in England and at Strassburg, being intended for commerce. That accounts for his knowledge of English and German. He was a wild youth, a reckless young man; and after plundering and disgracing his father, fell into the society of the cosmopolitan scoundrels that haunt the capitals of Europe. He has been a professional gambler in half-a-dozen cities; and is believed to have killed a man at Homburg, who beat him for cheating at cards. After this he wandered about as a circus rider and acrobat. He has been a

conjuror at fairs in Holland and Belgium. But his most daring exploits have been displayed in forgery. It was for defrauding the Bank of France that he was sent to Toulon. After two years, he escaped with a man called *Peau-rouge*. They reached Africa, and dwelt with the Arabs for some time. A year ago they came to England, and have given proof of undiminished rascality to many victims. Barbier met a certain Monsieur De Montgris in London, who was going to Beyrout. He passed himself off as an Arab merchant in search of a partner to open out a new path of trade in Syria and Africa. He won the entire confidence of De Montgris, sent him off on a fool's errand to Cairo, and then decamped with all he could lay his hands on. By a forged letter he got possession of these deeds from the notary employed by M. De Montgris, hoping to get a mortgage upon the property they represent. But suspicions were aroused, and he had to hide himself. He has done so in your house; and in his guise of Professor has, I have no doubt, deceived you as completely as he has deceived scores of others.'

The poor old Doctor listened to the end like a child to a tale of fascinating horror. When all was told, he leaned his head upon his hands. But he was soon roused by the noise of hurrying footsteps and a convulsive scream. Miss White rushed into the room, looked wildly at me and my companion, then threw herself into her uncle's arms. She was followed by two village policemen, one holding Barbier with an iron grip, and the other the man whose sobriquet was *Peau-rouge*. The French policeman followed.

I need not go into the details of the *dénouement*—how Barbier and his companion were returned to the French authorities, after a series of examinations before the English magistrates. Fortunately, Miss White's small property was not injured by the crafty devices of Barbier. Dr Walters felt the shock so acutely, that for many months he was quite unable to attend to the duties of the school. At his earnest request, I resumed my old position; and during his illness and absence, I acted as Vice-principal of Wimbourne Hall.

Three years after the events recorded in this little story, I was inducted proprietor of the school, and made the lifelong guardian of Emily.

MISAPPLIED VIRTUES.

SHAKESPEARE tells us that 'virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied.' From this text we would draw attention to the often-forgotten fact, that the best and most beautiful points of character may develop into monstrosities, if cultivated without pruning, or in the absence of counterbalancing qualities. A man cannot be too virtuous; but there may be a want of proportion between the good qualities of his mind and heart. How few have well-balanced minds—how few have their feelings under proper control. What is a good temper but a mixture of qualities in due proportion? Where this due proportion is wanting, the temper and disposition become perverted and bad. Almost all vices are the exaggeration of virtues—'virtues misapplied.'

As an illustration of this principle, let us take

that faculty by which we conceive and long after perfection, and see how even such a beautiful quality as Ideality may, if too exclusively cultivated, drag down rather than elevate its possessor. This divine Ideality, more than anything else, distinguishes man's nature from that of the brute. From it springs the dissatisfaction with present attainments, possessions, and performances, which induces us to strain after higher ones. To make us dissatisfied with the actual, and to spur us on continually after something for ever desirable, yet for ever receding—this is the office of Ideality. But every faculty has its instinctive, wild growth, which, like the spontaneous produce of the earth, is crude and weedy. Revenge, says Bacon, is a sort of wild justice; obstinacy is untutored firmness, and so exactingness is untrained Ideality; and a very great amount of misery, social and domestic, comes not of the faculty, but of its untrained exercise. The faculty which is ever conceiving, and desiring something better and more perfect, must be modified in its action by good sense, patience, and conscience, otherwise it induces a morbid, discontented spirit, which courses through the veins of individual and family life like a subtle poison.

An exacting person is one who fusses, fumes, finds fault, and scolds, because everything is not perfect in an imperfect world. Much more happy and good is he whose conceptions and desire of excellence are equally strong, but in whom there is a greater amount of discriminating common-sense. A sensible man does not make himself unhappy because he is unable to fly like a bird or swim like a fish. Common-sense teaches him that these accomplishments are so utterly unattainable, that they should not be desired.

Most people can see what is faulty in themselves and their surroundings; but while the dreamer frets and wears himself out over the unattainable, the happy, practical man is satisfied with what *can* be attained. There was much wisdom in the answer given by the Principal of a large public institution, when complimented on his habitual cheerfulness amid a diversity of cares—'I've made up my mind,' he said, 'to be satisfied, when things are done half as well as I would have them.'

Ideality often becomes an insidious mental and moral disease, acting all the more subtly from its alliance with what is noblest in us. Shall we not aspire to be perfect? Shall we be content with low standards in anything? To these inquiries there seems to be but one answer; yet the individual driven forward in blind, unreasoning aspiration, becomes wearied, bewildered, discontented, restless, fretful, and miserable. And being miserable himself, he is almost certain to make others unhappy. This is the secret reason why many pure, good, conscientious persons are only a source of uneasiness to those with whom they come in contact. They are exacting, discontented, unhappy; and spread discontent and

unhappiness around them. These are people who make no allowances either for themselves or others, but are equally angry and resentful towards both, and for this reason, that the great virtue of being dissatisfied with imperfection has turned into a vice, being misapplied.

Blind persistence in trifles, which is a deformed shoot from a very good stock, will furnish one other illustration of the misapplication of virtue. Like many others, this fault is the overaction of a necessary and praiseworthy quality. Without firmness, all human plans would be unstable as water. A poor woman being asked how it was that her son, after going on steadily for a considerable time, became at last changed in character, replied: 'I suppose because he had not the gift of continuance.' This perseverance of will, or 'gift of continuance,' is found in greater or less degree in every well-constituted nature. It is seen in the lower animals. The force by which a bulldog holds on to an antagonist, the persistence with which a mule will set himself to resist blows and menaces, are pertinent examples of the animal phase of a property which exists in human beings, and forms the foundation for that perseverance which carries on all the great and noble enterprises of life.

But there is a wild, uncultured growth of this faculty, the instinctive action of firmness uncontrolled by reason or conscience, which does much mischief, and causes no inconsiderable amount of misery. Speaking of this fault, Mrs Beecher Stowe imagines the case of two young people in the midst of that happy bustle which attends the formation of a first home. Hero and Leander have written each other a letter every day for two years, beginning with 'My dearest,' and ending with 'Your own,' &c.; they have sent each other flowers and rings and locks of hair; they have worn each other's portraits; they are convinced that never was there such sympathy of souls, such coincidence of opinion, such a reasonable foundation for mutual esteem. They do sincerely respect and love each other; nevertheless, the first year of their married life will be a continued battle about trifles, if both of them are set on having their way at all times. For example, this morning, Hero and Leander are presiding at the arrangement of the furniture which has just been sent to their pretty cottage.

'Put the piano in the bow-window,' says the lady.

'No; not in the bow-window,' says the gentleman.

'Why, my dear, of course it must go in the bow-window. How awkward it would look anywhere else! I have always seen pianos in bow-windows.'

'My love, you would not think of spoiling that beautiful prospect from the bow-window, by blocking it up with a piano. The proper place is just here in the corner of the room.'

'My dear, it would look dreadful there; and spoil the appearance of the room.'

'Well, for my part, my love, I think the appearance of the room would be spoiled if you filled up the bow-window. Think what a lovely place that would be to sit in!'

'Just as if we couldn't sit there behind the piano, if we wanted to! I insist upon it, it ought to stand in the bow-window.'

'Well, I don't think you ought to insist on an arrangement that really is disagreeable to me.'

And now Hero's cheeks flush, and the spirit burns within. But we need not quote all her foolish sayings, or those of Leander, as round and round they go, stating and restating their arguments, both getting more and more nervous and combative, as the animal instinct of self-will grows stronger and stronger.

Alas! how light a cause may move
Dissension between hearts that love,

when the noble quality of firmness is in this way misapplied.

We might mention innumerable instances of the misapplication of virtues. There cannot be a higher quality than Conscientiousness, yet even this may degenerate into censoriousness or hopeless self-condemnation. It was the constant prayer of the great and good Bishop Butler that he might be saved from what he called 'scrupulosity.' Veneration may become bigotry; and if a man be blindly reverential, he will probably sink to degrading superstition. Where there is a deficiency in Combativeness, there is little energy and force of character; but the excess of this quality makes a person fault-finding and contentious.

In two ways, good qualities become warped from their original purpose. Our faculties are 'like sweet bells jangled out of tune,' when any one faculty is allowed to make its voice heard above that of the rest; or when, not being too loud itself, a discord is created, because the opposite faculty, that should harmonise it, has been silenced. Every faculty may become diseased. Insanity is more or less partial. Firmness requires to be kept in check by Benevolence.

Self-esteem gives dignity and independence to the character, but it must be harmonised by Humility. Cautiousness and Prudence, if allowed to become morbid, may almost unfit a man for action.

If, then, we are endeavouring to cultivate ourselves and others, we must see that no one faculty, however good in itself, is developed unduly, or without equal care being bestowed on the growth of a counterbalancing faculty. That only is a true system of education which aims at the development, not of some, but of all the powers of man. In a well-balanced pair of scales, a feather on one side is found to turn the scale just as really as if a ton had been put into it. In the same way, if a man be deficient in one element, a fair development of the opposite quality will show an excess. Some men are exceedingly good; but being deficient in force and energy of character, they produce upon society very little influence. They are like lemonade with the lemon left out, altogether too sweet and insipid. Some, again, have a predominance of animal propensity, and their tendency of character is toward animal indulgences. Others have moral power, with too little intelligence to guide it. Others are warped and unbalanced by a predominance of social feeling. If they had enough of something else to balance their social sympathies, while people would admire them as the 'best fellows in the world,' they would not be obliged to regret in their behalf a course of dissipation and folly. Thus it is that even the

most admired virtues become vicious, unless they are directed in their exercise by that 'sweet reasonableness' which 'turns to scorn the falsehood of extremes.'

SUDDEN WHITE HAIR.

WITH so many professors of the art of rejuvenation proclaiming their readiness to turn old faces into new ones, smooth out wrinkles, obliterate crow's-feet, and restore the hair to its original abundance and colour, the putting of young heads upon old shoulders should be easy enough; but the proverbial impossibility of putting old heads upon young shoulders still seems to hold, although the feat has sometimes been accomplished by Nature herself. Sorrow, not Time, frosted the bright tresses of Mary Stuart and Marie-Antoinette; and theirs were not the only queenly heads that have been prematurely whitened by care and anxiety. While Hanover was waging an unequal contest with Prussia, a lady in attendance upon the consort of the brave blind king, wrote thus of her royal mistress: 'In the last two months, her hair has grown quite gray, I may say white. Four months since, one could scarcely discern a gray hair; now I can hardly see a dark one.'

A similar change has often taken place in the course of a single night. One of the witnesses in the Tichborne case deposed that the night after hearing of his father's death, he dreamed he saw him killed before his eyes, and found on awaking that his hair had turned quite white. An old man with snow-white hair said to Dr Moreau: 'My hair was as white as you see it now, long before I had grown old. Grief and despair at the loss of a tenderly-loved wife whitened my locks in a single night when I was not thirty years of age. Judge, then, of the force of my sufferings.' His white hairs brought no such recompense with them, as happened in the instance of the gay gallant who had the hardihood to hold a love-tryst in the palace grounds of the king of Spain. Betrayed by the barking of an unsympathetic hound, the telling of the old, old story was interrupted by the appearance of the king's guard. The scared damsel was allowed to depart unchallenged; but her lover was held captive, to answer his offence. Love-making under the shadow of the royal palace was a capital crime; and so overwhelmed with horror at the idea of losing his head for following the promptings of his heart was the rash wooer, that before the sun rose, his hair had turned quite gray. This being told King Ferdinand, he pardoned the offender, thinking he was sufficiently punished.

When the Emperor Leopold was about to make his grand entry into Vienna, the old sexton of St Joseph's Cathedral was much troubled in his mind. Upon such occasions it had been his custom to take his stand on the pinnacle of the tower and wave a flag as the imperial pageant passed by; but he felt that age had so weakened his nerve that he dared not again attempt the perilous performance. After thinking the matter over, he came to the conclusion that he must find a substitute; and knowing his pretty daughter had plenty of stalwart suitors, the old fellow publicly announced that the man who could take

his place successfully should be his son-in-law. To his intense disgust, the offer was at once accepted by Gabriel Petersheim, his special aversion, and the special favourite of the girl, who saw not with her father's eyes. On the appointed day, Vienna opened its gates to the new-made Emperor; but it was evening, or near upon evening, when the young flag-bearer welcomed the procession from St Joseph's Tower. His task performed, Gabriel would have descended from the airy height, but found his way barred. Two wretches had done the treacherous sexton's bidding, and closed the trap-door of the upper stairway, leaving the brave youth to choose between precipitating himself on the pavement below, or clinging the cold night through to the slender spire, with but ten inches of foothold. He chose possible life to certain death; but when rescue came with the morning, his eyes were sunken and dim, his cheeks yellow and wrinkled, his curly locks as white as snow. Gabriel Petersheim had won his bride at a fearful cost.

Believing a fortune might be easily won in the oil-country, a young Bostonian went there to enrich himself. One stormy night, a glare in the sky told him that an oil-tank was on fire a few miles off; and knowing that after a time, the oil would boil up and flow over the side of the tank, he made for a hill to witness the spectacle. 'She's coming!' a man shouted. There was a rumbling sound, and then the burning oil shot up from the tank, boiled over its sides, and floated down the creek, destroying everything in its way, and setting fire to a second tank. Curiosity getting the better of discretion, he ran to the ground in the rear of the tanks, to get a better view, and in trying to avoid a pool of burning oil, fell into a mudhole, and stuck fast therein. Struggling till he could struggle no longer, he lay back exhausted, watching the billows of smoke surging upwards and floating away into space. Suddenly his ears were startled by the sound of cannon-firing; a column of flame and smoke shot up from one of the tanks, and he was stricken almost senseless with the knowledge that the 'pipe-line men' were cannonading the first tank, to draw off the oil, and so prevent another overflow. He tried to shout, but the words would not come. A little stream of burning oil ran slowly but surely towards him. He watched it creeping on until it was almost upon him; then in a moment all was dark. When he came back to consciousness, he found himself in his own room, surrounded by 'the boys,' who had seen him just in time to save him. It was a weary while before he was himself again, and then he was inclined to doubt if he was himself, for his once dark hair was perfectly white.

Instances have not been wanting of the hair being deprived of its colour in a few minutes. The home-coming of the king of Naples after the Congress of Laybach was celebrated with much public rejoicing. To do the occasion honour, the manager of the San Carlo Theatre produced a grand mythological pageant, in which an afterwards well-known opera-singer made his debut in the character of Jupiter. The stage-thunder rolled, the stage-lightning flashed, as the Olympian monarch descended on his cloud-supported throne. Suddenly, screams of horror rang through

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the house; the queen fainted, and all was uproar and consternation, until the voice of the king was heard above the din, crying: 'If any one shouts or screams again, I'll have that person shot!' Something had gone wrong with the machinery before the clouds had descended ten feet, and Jupiter had fallen through. Fortunately, a strong iron wire or rope caught his cloak, and uncoiling with his weight, let him down by degrees. But a workman falling with him was impaled upon a strong iron spike supporting the scenery. In ten minutes or so they reached the ground, the workman dead, the singer dazed, but able to thank heaven on his knees for his escape; and then the awe-stricken people saw that the black-haired deity had become transformed into a white-haired mortal, whose youthful features formed a strange contrast to their venerable-looking crown.

Staff-surgeon Parry, while serving in India during the Mutiny, saw a strange sight. Among the prisoners taken in a skirmish at Chanda was a sepoy of the Bengal army. He was brought before the authorities, and put to the question. Fully alive to his position, the Bengalee stood almost stupefied with fear, trembling greatly, with horror and despair plainly depicted on his countenance. While the examination was proceeding, the bystanders were startled by the sergeant in charge of the prisoner exclaiming: 'He is turning gray!' All eyes were turned on the unfortunate man, watching with wondering interest the change coming upon his splendid glossy jet-black locks. In half an hour they were of a uniform grayish hue.

Some years ago, a young lady who was anxiously awaiting the coming of her husband-elect, received a letter conveying the sad tidings of his shipwreck and death. She instantly fell to the ground insensible, and so remained for five hours. On the following morning, her sister saw that her hair, which had been previously of a rich brown colour, had become as white as a cambric handkerchief, her eyebrows and eyelashes retaining their natural colour. After a while the whitened hair fell off, and was succeeded by a new growth of gray. This case coming under the observation of Dr Erasmus Wilson, shattered his unbelief in the possibility of the sudden conversion of the hair from a dark colour to snow-white. No man knows more about the hair than Dr Wilson; but he is at a loss to explain the phenomenon quite to his own satisfaction. 'If,' says he, 'it be established that the hair is susceptible of permeation by fluids derived from the blood—a transmission of fluids from the blood-vessels of the skin into the substance of the hair really occurs, the quantity and nature being modified by the peculiarity of constitution or state of health of the individual—it follows that such fluids, being altered in their chemical qualities, may possess the power of impressing new conditions on the structure into which they enter. Thus, if they contain an excess of salts of lime, they may deposit salts of lime in the tissue of the hair, and so produce a change in its appearance from dark to gray.' Then he tells us: 'The phenomena may be the result of electrical action; it may be the consequence of a chemical alteration wrought in the very blood itself, or it may be a conversion for which the tissue of the hair is

chiefly responsible.' So many 'may-bes' from such an authority prove that the mystery of the sudden whitening of the hair is yet unsolved. It is likely to remain unsolved, since the Doctor—more modest than many of his brethren—owns that 'the mysteries of vital chemistry are unknown to man.'

The whitening of the hair wrought by mental disturbance is sometimes only of a partial nature. Vexation of spirit gave Henry of Navarre a party-coloured moustache. An old writer tells of an Irish captain going to deliver himself up to Lord Broghill, the commander of the English forces, who, being met on his way by a party of English soldiers, was made prisoner, and was so apprehensive of being put to death before Lord Broghill could interfere in his behalf, that the anxiety of his mind turned some of his locks quite white, while the others remained of their original reddish hue. Perhaps the curious change was less annoying to its victim than that which befell an American girl, whose first intimation of her lover's falsity was the reading an account of his marriage in a newspaper. After a night's brooding over the traitor's perfidy, her looking-glass showed her that one side of her head was still adorned with tresses of golden brown; but the other, alas! was decked with locks more befitting a grandam than a maiden still in her teens; though even this was not so bad as was the case of a French girl, who, frightened by the floor of her room giving way beneath her, shed her hair so quickly that in three days' time she was—to use the expressive comparison of a chronicler of the event—'as bald as a bell-handle.'

THE OLDEST INHABITANT.

A VILLAGE SKETCH.

'NEIGHBOUR FROST' was the oldest inhabitant of Wenlow. There was no doubt about it. The parish register attested the fact, and the whole village recognised its truth, and respected her accordingly. A woman who was capable of attaining the patriarchal age of ninety-eight, had displayed energy and powers of endurance worthy of the veneration of the neighbourhood. She was petted by the parson and his wife; triumphantly quoted by the doctor as an incontestable proof of the salubrity of the locality and the prevailing longevity of its inhabitants; proudly exhibited to admiring visitors as one of the curiosities of the place; and much cherished by her relatives, as a valuable help from a pecuniary point of view, besides conferring distinction upon the family. Many a shilling and half-crown were dropped into her withered palm, as a token of admiration of her brave defiance of 'the King of Terrors.' Although her brown face was puckered into as many wrinkles as a withered apple, her small, dark eyes had a shrewd twinkle; and her little, bent form had not utterly lost all trace of the sturdy vigour which had helped her through so many years of toil and privation. Her memory, too, still served to recall many quaint, old-world histories, and perhaps a few forgotten scandals concerning folks who had long since 'gone over to

the majority' in the quiet churchyard. Altogether, she was, as her fellow-villagers said, 'a wonder.' She led a life of luxurious ease, in a comfortably-padded easy-chair, in the warmest corner of the fireside of her eldest grandson; made much of by her numerous descendants, amongst whom she was familiarly known as 'the owd crittur,' to distinguish her from another grandmother who had only attained the trifling age of seventy-seven.

Although there was a fair sprinkling of old people in Wenlow and the adjacent villages, there were but two or three tottering on the verge of ninety, and none beyond that; therefore, to 'Neighbour Frost' belonged the proud privilege of having passed all in the race with Time, and nearly wrested a century from his niggardly grasp. It was a grand pre-eminence, and much gloried in by the ancient dame herself. It was her *spécialité*, the crown which no one could take away from her. In respect of age she was unrivalled in the neighbourhood. Her name might be handed down to posterity, and obtain honourable mention with Methuselah and Old Parr, or with the evergreen Countess of Desmond.

Suddenly, however, this blissful dream was rudely and cruelly disturbed. A great-grandson rushed home from school one morning with the appalling news that a 'very owd woman, owder than Grannie, wor just come to Wenlow.—You can see her, Grannie, if you look out. She's Master Simpson's mother; and they're a-lifting of her out o' the cart agin his house. They say she's close on a hunderd.'

'What!' shrieked poor old Mrs Frost; 'John Simpson's mother come here! I thowt she'd been dead years agone. What did they bring the owd crone here for? I niver liked her.'

'Well,' observed the boy's mother, who had just come in from a gossip, 'she's been living with a daughter who's just dead; and as she was born here, Simpson's people thowt the owd gal might as well end her days here.'

'And a rare article she looks!' disdainfully snorted old Mrs Frost, who had been watching her rival's laborious descent from the cart to the ground.

Dame Simpson certainly was not in such good preservation as our venerable friend. She looked painfully old, 'with the fardel of her years overprest,' withered and fleshless—a mere little bundle of bones; with lack-lustre eyes, which seemed to look dimly at you through the haze of vanished years; and with a feeble, piping voice, that seemed to have been long ago left behind also. However, she was old, very old, and a genuine production of the parish.

On looking into its records, it was discovered that she was just a year older than 'Neighbour Frost.' Having left her native place early in life, her existence had been forgotten by all but her immediate relatives; but now every one seemed anxious to make amends for previous negligence; and many a mortification did the Frost family endure in seeing the fickle public lavishing its attention upon the new-comer as the greatest curiosity. The presents of tea, eggs, dainty little puddings, or 'a few broth,' which used to be old Mrs Frost's peculiar perquisites, and the visits from 'the gentry,' were now divided with the

interloper. 'Worst of all,' said Mrs Frost, 'Miss Alice, the parson's daughter, went and drewed a pictur of the poor, toothless, owd crittur; and the parson, he went to talk to her; but she wor wholly *waffled*, and could only tell him she wor tired out, and longed to be laid to rest; and then Nurse Simpson says in her carnying, fawning way, "'Tis only the beautiful soup and wine and sich as you kindly send, sir, as keeps her from sinkin'; but I trust we shan't lose the pore old dear yet; she seems to bring a blessing on the house. She's a gracious soul!'"

'A pretty penny she and John are making just now, I warrant,' was the indignant comment of Mrs Frost's grand-daughter.

This sad state of heart-burning and rivalry did not last long, however; for, four months after her arrival, the poor, harmless cause of it retired from the contest, glad to leave this bustling world. From that time forth, 'Neighbour Frost's' face wore an expression of unruffled serenity. Her prestige was restored; and when, some two years later, she was lying at the point of death, and her irrepressible grandson burst into the room with the intelligence that 'people had made up their minds when Grannie died, to have a grand berryin', and put up a stone to her in the churchyard,' her cup of joy was full—'Tell 'em,' she feebly faltered, 'to put on the stone, I wor over a hunderd, and the owdest in the parish, living or dead. Sally Simpson wor only ninety-nine.' With this 'Nunc Dimittis' she quietly closed her eyes. Her warfare was accomplished, her life 'rounded and complete.'

Although the day be never so long,
At last it ringeth to evensong.

A THOUGHT IN SUMMER.

It was a day in June; my heart, perplexed
With doubt and question, sick with hope deferred,
Hardened by press of common cares, and vexed
In toil of living—felt its pulses stirred
By throbbings of another, purer life—
Forgot its doubting, turned away from care,
Left for a while its weariness and strife,
To drink the sweetness of the Summer air,
To wait, and look, and listen. South winds blew
With touches light as mother-kisses laid
On sleeping infant brows. Two swallows flew
Swiftly on quivering wings athwart the glade,
Like flakes of snow in sunlight. Through the blue,
A fleecy cloudlet wandered; in its shade
A tremulous skylark hung. On every side
Gleamed leafy hedgerows, starred with Summer flowers,
And snowy hawthorn. In the distance, died
The cuckoo's faltering note. From nearer bowers,
Floated the soft, incessant, pleading cry
Of shy wood-pigeons. For all living things
Thrilled with a glad awakening life—and I
Felt in my heart the earnest of all Springs
And Summers yet to come, which neither pain,
Age, nor decay can touch—the living germ
Of life immortal. So my heart again
Gathered new courage, and with purpose firm,
Turned to its present living, strong to wait,
Fearless of wintry days and changing clime,
Ready to pass from winter through the gate
Of Death into the endless Summer-time.

A. K.

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